United Nations A/56/122

General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 June 2001

Original: English

Fifty-sixth session
Item 29 of the preliminary list*
Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/42 of 21 November 2000, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution. The report provides a brief resume of the status of the cooperative relationship between ECO and various United Nations organizations during 2000 and 2001.

II. United Nations Development Programme

2. The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) has provided financial and technical assistance valued at US$ 1 million for capacity-building of the ECO secretariat. Consultancies are being implemented under this project in the following priority areas: telecommunication; implementation of ECO transit agreements; food security; and economic research. Computerization of the secretariat and procurement of material for the library is also included in this project. High-level meetings were held regularly between ECO and UNDP to review the implementation of the project.

III. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

3. ECO relations with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) were marked by an exchange of visits between senior officials of the two organizations. The following areas of cooperation were discussed and reviewed: (a) follow up and implementation of the provisions of a memorandum of understanding between ECO and UNCTAD; (b) implementation of the joint ECO/UNCTAD/Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)/Islamic Development Bank (IDB) project on multimodal transport; (c) prospects for technical assistance by UNCTAD to ECO in developing a regional investment agreement; (d) possible UNCTAD assistance in the implementation of the ECO Transit Trade Agreement and the Transit Transport Framework Agreement and in the development of a mechanism to reduce transit charges in the region; and (e) proposals for a joint seminar on relevant customs issues.

4. During a meeting held at the ECO secretariat between the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the

* A/56/50.

01-43144 (E) 170701

Secretary-General of ECO, the following areas for future cooperation were identified: (a) implementation of the Transit Trade Agreement; (b) trade and customs clearance aspects of multimodal transport in the ECO region; and (c) trade efficiency and e-commerce.

IV. International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO

5. A trade flow analysis of the countries in the region was presented during an International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO (ITC) mission to the ECO secretariat in March 2000. The ITC analysis outlined existing trade potentials in the region to boost the level of intraregional trade from its current ratio of around 6-7 per cent. A project on promoting ECO trade by organizing a meeting of buyers and sellers is planned. The project is anticipated to have a positive impact on intraregional trade and in enhancing business contacts among member States' trading companies.

6. As a follow up, a product selection workshop was held at the ECO secretariat in March 2000. Trade promotion bodies and national chambers of commerce of ECO member States participated in the workshop. UNDP has indicated its willingness to partially finance the project with a contribution of $150,000.

V. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

7. Frequent contacts between ESCAP and ECO continue to take place at all levels. ESCAP continued to analyse the economic performance and short-term and medium-term prospects of the economies of ECO member States in the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific. The 2001 Survey addressed the issues of financing investment for development, which pose a formidable challenge for many developing countries in the region covered by ESCAP, including ECO member States.

8. Under a project on development of environment statistics in the ESCAP region funded by the Netherlands, ESCAP plans to organize the fourth subregional training workshop on environment statistics for ECO countries, including Central Asian countries, in collaboration with ECO, at Tehran, tentatively scheduled for August 2001.

9. ESCAP initiated a project to strengthen subregional economic cooperation in trade and investment among the south-western member countries of ESCAP. The major goals are to assess the requirements in strengthening subregional economic cooperation in trade and investment and to promote an enabling environment through information exchange and better networking among business promotion organizations. The efforts will bring greater alignment of trade and investment policies and practices and the applicable legal and administrative regimes that foster sustainable trade and investment strategies.

10. Following the seminar on trade and investment information networking held in February 1999, a second seminar organized by ECO and hosted by the Government of Turkey was held at Antalya, Turkey in October 2000. The seminar was intended to provide a forum for member countries and international organizations to exchange information on their experience regarding the development of information networking and to establish an ECO network for trade and investment information exchange. A third seminar on the subject is scheduled to be held in Pakistan in November 2001, with the collaboration of ESCAP.

11. Cooperation with ECO is envisaged in the implementation of a new project, submitted under the development account, on capacity-building for managing globalization of ESCAP member States, including all ECO member countries with economies in transition.

12. The Secretary-General of ECO participated in the ESCAP meeting of eminent persons ("Friends of the Chair") held at Tehran in March 2001 on the integration of Asian developing countries into the international trading system.

13. ESCAP, the Economic Commission for Europe and ECO are actively cooperating under the special programme for the economies of Central Asia in the field of transport facilitation and border-crossing movements, with ECO participating in the programme's project working group. ESCAP is maintaining the Asian highway database, containing information on the regional road transport network of the ECO countries.

14. Under an ECO/ESCAP/UNCTAD joint project for the introduction of multimodal transport in the ECO region financed by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the following activities will be undertaken: (a) a

review of existing ECO-wide studies/projections for commodity movements and plans for translating future trade flows into potential container and multimodal transport requirements; (b) multimodal transport corridor studies to identify physical infrastructural and non-physical impediments to the smooth flow of goods; (c) a regional multimodal transport seminar; (d) five country-level training workshops on multimodal transport; and (e) eight country-level workshops on land transport conventions in eight ECO countries.

15. ESCAP recently launched the State of the Environment in Asia and the Pacific, 2000, which covers a number of ECO member countries. Long-term cooperation between ECO and ESCAP is envisaged in developing policy responses to the environmental problems identified in the report.

16. ESCAP, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and ADB, is organizing a subregional meeting at Almaty in September 2001 for Central Asian and Caucasus countries in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held at Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. The ECO secretariat will be invited to participate in the subregional meeting.

17. A number of ECO countries attended the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held at Kitakyushu, Japan, from 31 August to 5 September 2000. The Conference adopted the Regional Action Programme 2001-2005 and the Kitakyushu Initiative for Clean Environment; it is expected that ESCAP and ECO will collaborate in their implementation. The Regional Action Programme identifies the priority areas for action in the region, including the Central Asian and Caucasus subregion. The Kitakyushu Initiative is the first step in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme aimed at twinning arrangements of cities of developing countries with Kitakyushu to improve urban environmental management.

VI. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

18. The United Nation Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is assisting in the ECO effort to build capacity in small and medium-sized enterprises of member States. In this respect, a joint ECO/UNIDO-International Centre for Science and High Technology seminar on technology management and technology transfer negotiations was to be held at the ECO secretariat from 23 to 26 June 2001, with technical and financial assistance of UNIDO.

VII. United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

19. The Secretary-General of ECO and the head of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law have held discussions and interest has been expressed in organizing a seminar for ECO member States in order to acquaint them with trade practices, arbitration and other aspects of private commercial law.

VIII. United Nations International Drug Control Programme

20. The first phase of a project to establish a Drug Control Coordination Unit in the ECO secretariat was completed in December 2000. During the duration of the project period, funds provided by the European Union and Japan were utilized, with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme as the project's executing agency. The United Nations Office for Project Services was associated with the project and provided the equipment. The following activities were undertaken: (a) all member States introduced their national focal points; (b) two task force meetings on law enforcement and coordination of member States were held at Tehran from 26 to 28 February 2000; (c) an inventory mission to all member States, except Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, was undertaken in April and May 2000; (d) a provisional glossary of State and non-State actors active in the field of drug control was prepared and sent to member States; (e) provisional country profiles for 1999-2000 pertaining to the drug situation and provisional drug trends in the member States were circulated; and (f) a web site for the Drug Control Coordination Unit was designed and is in the process of being launched.

21. A draft document for the second phase of the project, which was finalized by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, has been forwarded to the member States for their views. The second phase is expected to commence in mid-2001.

IX. United Nations Population Fund

22. Within the framework of the memorandum of understanding between ECO and the United Nations Population Fund, five joint activities have taken place, the last being a conference held at Istanbul in May 2000 on expanding contraceptive choice and improving quality of reproductive health programmes.

X. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

23. The first and second phases of the joint identification missions for ECO cooperation in the agricultural sector were completed in 2000 with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and IDB. The next phase will commence during 2001.

XI. United Nations Environment Programme

24. A draft memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was prepared and sent to UNEP after being cleared by member States. In view of the preparation of a regional environment action plan, with the support of five Central Asian countries and regional experts, it was considered that it would be more appropriate to review the draft memorandum of understanding after the regional environment action plan process was completed in late 2001.